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COMMUNIST AREA

Ann

- USSR: Agriculture
6 November 1967

BREZHNEV ON AGRICULTURE

Keynote speakers at the October revolution anniversary celebrations each year devote some comment to the developments in Soviet agriculture. In the Fiftieth Anniversary ceremonies, the general secretary of the CPSU, L.I. Brezhnev, in his four-hour speech, directed salient remarks on agriculture to the near fifty percent of the Soviet population living in the countryside who supply one third of the USSR's total labor force that is engaged in agriculture.¹

Collectivization, he reminded the audience, was one of the most integral parts of the socialist revolution. As a revolutionary measure, Brezhnev commented that it involved a sharp struggle and necessitated sacrificing many needs of the countryside in favor of industrialization, which created "considerable difficulties." He described the struggle against the "class enemy" but he noticeably omitted to mention where the class enemy was primarily to be found -- in the countryside. Socialization of agriculture created new people in the villages -- "our collective farm peasantry." Nowadays, Brezhnev declared, the word collective farmer (kolkhoznik) is spoken by all Soviet people "with deep respect" (sic). The collective farm peasantry, he continued, stands in unshakeable unity with the working class and "has become a significant political force in Soviet society."

It is singularly interesting that the B and K leadership continue to refer to the cooperative farmers as "collective farm peasantry" in contrast to Khrushchev who usually called them kolkhozniki. In view of a second generation of farmers on the land, far removed from the

1) Pravda, 4 November 1967.

illiterate peasant, the concept of a peasant-muzhik is obsolescent and a caricature of the twenty million people engaged in collective farm and private plot farming.

In the plans for the further development of agriculture, the Party secretary disclosed that the forces of nature had to be controlled for man's benefit. Accordingly he reiterated that primary stress would be placed on the fulfillment of a long-term program of land amelioration; the expansion in the use of chemicals in farming, and an improvement in the technology of land management. The country is now in a position to invest more resources in the development of agriculture, he claimed. These two policies as announced by Brezhnev indicate he was on the side of Polyansky in the recent defense of agricultural investments that appeared in Kommunist as reported by western sources.²

Agriculture, he continued, was to stand in the same line as industry in labor productivity, technical equipment, and the utilization of scientific achievements.

On the all important grain problem, which on previous occasions speakers had declared solved, the general secretary reported that state procurements of grain fell by 17.6 million tons this year as compared to 1966. The volume of deliveries was stated at "about 3.5 billion poods," or 57.3 million tons. This sum is the minimum set by the state for grain deliveries, and is a sharp fallback from the 74.9 million tons delivered last year. The main cause of the setback from last year's record harvest was the failure of the RSFSR, its southeastern and Siberian areas, to come up with a good harvest. There was a 9 million ton shortage here as compared to 1966, along with Kazakhstan which turned over only one half as much grain this year as last, or 8 million tons compared to 17 million tons. The reliable Ukraine, where weather conditions are more stable, yielded an excellent harvest. So two of the three main granaries had disappointing yields.

On this basis, an overall grain output for the jubilee year would be of the order of 150 million tons, or the third highest in Russian agricultural history. This is a distinct disappointment to the Kremlin leaders who had hoped for a repetition of the record harvest of last year. Such a performance, however, will insure adequate supplies for domestic use and nominal export shipment but precludes substantial supplies to help feed the millions of undernourished people in the underdeveloped countries.

2) Reuter, 26 October 1967.
New York Times, 29 October 1967.

Perhaps most annoying, the jubilee harvest will not add any great amount to the grain reserves, long depleted under Khrushchev's schemes and only last year augmented. And finally, the Five Year Plan for grain output set at 167 million tons on the average clearly will be a difficult task to fulfill.

On balance, the jubilee year produced a clear slippage from the high level of last year, but still the third best harvest on record. It will require substantial increases in the flow of investments into agriculture to ensure finally the high and stable long planned for Soviet agriculture.

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